

LOXTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

MINUTES OF THE MEETING 10th May 2023 DRAFT

1. Chairman's welcome to the public
2. Apologies for Absence- Cllr Eden, Cllr Davies, Cllr Bassett
3. Agreement of the minutes of the meeting of 9th May 2022
4. Chairman's Summary of the Year:

The last 12 months have been very eventful. We have experienced 3 National events. In June 2022 we celebrated Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee, then in September we marked her death followed by a period of national mourning and this last Bank Holiday witnessed the Coronation of King Charles III and Queen Camilla.

The Parish came together to mark all of these historic events. The Parish Council joined forces with the village hall committee to fund and present every child in the Parish with a Jubilee coin. Whilst bunting and parties were much in evidence in June and again in May this year, the period of national mourning for the late Queen was acknowledged with a proclamation and photographs on the village noticeboards and books of condolence in Christon and Loxton churches.

A further key event was the recent Parish and District Council elections. Councillor Maria Taversari stood down from office due to other commitments whilst the remaining Parish Councillors offered themselves up for re-election. There being no other candidates, Councillors Shipton, Bassett, Davies and Eden were returned to Office without the need to or expenses of an election. The District Council Elections resulted in two Green Party candidates, Tom Nicholson and Joe Tristram being elected to North Somerset District Council for the Banwell and Winscombe Ward. Ann Harley, who as one of the former Councillors for this Ward was not returned to Office. During her time as a District Councillor Ann has been a great source of support to this Parish Council and her experience and knowledge will be greatly missed. I should like to take this opportunity, on behalf of Loxton Parish Council, to record our grateful thanks to Ann and express our appreciation for all the assistance that she has given to us and the parishioners over the years. Her absence from our Parish Council meetings and her willingness to take up residents' concerns with the District Council will be challenging.

The usual concerns have resurfaced over the year –

Missed waste collections and recycling collections plus the occasional fly tipping. Both a periodic annoyance but usually dealt with by North Somerset Council once reported.

Maintenance of the Highways is a continuous problem exacerbated by the collapse of the stone wall adjoining the road linking Loxton and Christon just beyond the Council houses and damaged signage at Cowslip Green. Fortunately the collapsed road near Oak Farm has been dealt with. The Parish Clerk and I met with Nick Raymond, the Council Official responsible for highways. He is fully aware of all of our longstanding complaints, all of which are on his "to do" list. He cannot give any timescale as to when they will be addressed due to lack of funds and higher priorities elsewhere. The message given was that residents should not merely complain to the Parish Council but also directly to North Somerset as the more complaints the Authority receives, the more likely they are to react.

We have continued to monitor Planning Applications and I am pleased to say there has not been anything contentious in the last 12 months.

Going forward we shall need to keep an eye on traffic passing through the villages, especially tractors being driven at speed.

Our most pressing problem is to deal with any threats to property and person caused by ash dieback in the "Parish Acre". We have had two different tree surgeons and an agricultural contractor inspect the site, but their solutions vary as do the potential costs. The Agricultural Contractor has provided the most affordable option but

is currently verifying the need for a felling licence from the Forestry Commission together with the work needed to submit such an application and to apply for planning permission. We are currently awaiting their response. To make provision for these expenses and to rebuild our capital reserves which have become depleted it has become necessary to increase our annual Precept to £5,500.00 for the current year.

In conclusion I would like to express thanks to the following:

- Sally Ferguson, our Clerk, has provided us with a period of stability and whose guidance has been invaluable. My fellow Councillors who freely give of their time.
- Dave Southwood, who keeps the Loxton Bus Shelter neat and tidy and which looks resplendent thanks to the colourful and amusing mural painted by Julie Denelly. Hopefully it might have more use if the recently launched Westlink on demand bus service takes off.
- Mike Vowles, the village orderly without whom the Parish Council would find it hard to maintain Cowslip Green, the Parish Acre, and the Christon Village Pump.
- Jane Jay and Mary Counsell, the church wardens at Loxton and Christon Church, for their tireless dedication to ensuring that both churches are maintained for future generations and their marvellous displays throughout the last year.
- To the entire village hall committee who have worked so hard to provide entertaining community events well attended and enjoyed.
- Phil Davies for his vision and unstinting work which has transformed the former Loxton Blacksmiths into a Community Hub and Café. The chef, Kieran, obtained a 5-star hygiene rating and has produced some amazing meals. Thanks to grants from the National Grid and National lottery the Hub now has a community minibus.
- The Editors, contributors and Producers of Contact Magazine and the administrator and users of the WhatsApp groups that help to foster our sense of community and are a great source of information.

The Big Help Out is thriving in our community.

Ian Shipton

5. An overview of the accounts for the year up to 31st March 2023 was given by the Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. The floor was given a verbal report of the income and expenditure and any significant variances were explained. It was noted that expenditure was more than the Precept requested but that the carry-forward figure was up by £650.00 on last year. The general reserves are a bit lower than they should be, and the Clerk recommended working towards 6 months of Budget (£2750), as with such a low Precept it would not take much (such as tree work, covering a contested election or long term sick and having to employ a locum) to completely deplete the pot.

	<u>2021/22</u>	<u>2022/23</u>
<u>Total income</u>	3863	5268
<u>Expenditure</u>	2919	4615
<u>Staff costs</u>	1602	1705
<u>Balance carried forward</u>	2726	3378

6. Questions- None were forthcoming

7. Close of business- 7.28pm